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OBSERVATIONS

ON THE INTENDED

WORCESTER CANAL.

IT having been proposed to make a navigable Canal from the town of Stourbridge, or some convenient place in its neighbourhood, to the River Severn, near Diglis Meadows, below Worcester; surveys have actually been taken for that purpose: And, by accurate estimates of the expence attending such an undertaking, it appears that the whole may be completed for the sum of 120,000l.

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The various advantages which arise from inland navigations in general are obvious; and need not be pointed out, in a country where they have already so greatly contributed to the improvement of our manufactures, the extension of our commerce, and the enhancing the value even of private property. But the following observations apply, in a particular manner, to the scheme which is now proposed; and evidently shew, not only the manifest *utility*, but, in some degree, even the *necessity* of it.

Merchandise of every species is conveyed down the river Severn, every fortnight, to Bristol, at the spring tides, from Bewdley, Stourport, and Worcester. To the first and last of these places, the goods which



which are designed for Bristol are usually brought by land carriage at a very great expence.† And it is a known fact, that the navigation upon the Severn above Worcester, is very uncertain and precarious, by reason of a considerable number of troublesome shoals* by which it is frequently obstructed, and which, for near half the year, render it impassable for craft of more than from five to fifteen tons burthen,

It was, indeed, expected that the canal which joins the Severn at Stourport would have benefitted the public in an effectual manner ; But, from its entering the river

† Twenty shillings per ton for heavy goods ; and more, in proportion, for finer, or perishable commodities.

* Twenty ; or very near that number.

in so improper a place, it has been found totally inadequate to the purpose for which it was intended. And it will appear, upon a bare inspection of the map, that it was totally unconnected with every idea of that improvement which is now found so requisite. Thus are partial schemes often adopted, which further experience proves to be insufficient to procure the desired ends.

To remedy the evils which are now so justly complained of, it was proposed, about a year ago, to improve the navigation of the Severn, by erecting Locks and Weirs, or by deepening the bed of the river at the several Shoals; and this very attempt was a full acknowledgment that the evil was not imaginary. However, the *first* of these measures would undoubtedly

edly have occasioned great floods over the valuable meadow lands on the banks of the Severn; and the *latter*, by letting off the water too rapidly, would, in many places, and in slack water, have left the river nearly dry, instead of rendering it more navigable. Neither scheme, in short, could prudently be adopted: As the inconveniencies which would have attended either undertaking, immediately struck every person who had the slightest acquaintance with the nature of locks, floods, and shoals.

Besides, such attempts upon the river, whether they were attended with success or not, would have produced a *certain* tax upon the public, which, in every light, must have been burdensome to trade: And the Upper parts of the river, from Stour-
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port to Shrewsbury, where such very large Coal and Iron works are planted, would sustain the burden of this tax, without the possibility of reaping any advantage from the *presumed* improvement; because no vessels of burden can come from those places at all, unless when there are such freshes or floods of water in the river, as would render any improvement unnecessary*.

Merchandize to and from the ports of Hull and Liverpool, together with the trade to and from Manchester, with all its connections Northward, (great and extensive as they are) are, at present, subject to this uncertain Navigation; the ruinous

* A fresh is a flood of water coming down from the mountains in North Wales, occasioned either by the sudden dissolution of snow, or by the heavy rains which often fall in that country.

effects

effects of which are, by no means, confined to the neighbourhood of Worcester and Bewdley, but are prejudicial to the commercial Interests even of more distant Countries. These are affected by it in several very important Articles. But what shall we say, in particular, with respect to Coals, so essential not only to the Comforts, but even to the Necessities of Life? And yet this precarious Navigation sometimes occasions the price of this most indispensable requisite to vary more than one half (or *ten in twenty* Shillings) in every Market down the Severn! I need not cite the Cities of Worcester and Gloucester to evidence this assertion. It is one of those stubborn facts which has been too lately and too severely felt, to admit of any doubt of its existence.

The trade from Shropshire has an undoubted

doubted right to the free Navigation of the Severn. It is an heritage to which the valuable Iron works and Mines upon its banks give it an indisputable Claim. If the present Canal which enters the Severn at Stourport is found insufficient to serve the public, without a further tax, to remove the Shoals which lie between Stourport and Worcester; It is surely *hard*, if not *unjust*, to make the Works above Stourport contribute to that, from which they never can derive the most trifling advantage. And, If the Canal to Stourport is unequal to the ends the *Public* looks for, and the general interest requires; whatever is defective in their plan, should naturally be supplied by some more effectual remedy. This it is which the Intended Worcester Canal holds forth,

that from the Severn to Stroud, extends from the Severn below Gloucester, to Stroud, Letchlade, Cirencester, and through a very considerable tract of country, by means of the Isis, Thames, Kennet, &c. with which it is connected: And these places have their supply of Coal (if indeed they can obtain any supply at all) at a very extravagant rate. The Proprietors of the Canal from the Severn to the Thames have undertaken this great work at the expence of *one hundred and thirty thousand pounds*, with power to expend *sixty thousand* more, should circumstances require it; exclusive of what has been laid out upon the Canal to Stroud, where the Thames and Severn Canal begins. All these must feel the benefit of this new undertaking to Worcester, in the most ample degree. As, therefore, they

are likely to reap the greatest advantages from the plan now in consideration, there is not the least doubt but they will give it their utmost support. The interest they have in its success is too important, as well as obvious, for them to neglect it, or rather, not to forward it by the most hearty concurrence.

Another, and by no means the least material advantage of the projected scheme, is this : Vessels generally come up the Severn as far as Worcester, without hiring men to haul them ; which is not the case higher up the River. For, from Worcester to Stourport and upwards, there are from five to ten men generally employed to tow an empty vessel against the stream, and double that number when the vessel is laden, at the expence of about 2s. 6d. for each man.* Hence, the freight of

* To Stourport only.

of Merchandise from Bristol to Worcester is seldom more than is charged from Worcester to Stourport ; though the distance between the two first mentioned places is above *eighty miles*, and between Worcester and Stourport only *thirteen*. But in these thirteen miles, there are a number of Shoals, where the water sometimes flows only from ten to fifteen inches. Whatever Merchandise is thus brought up to Worcester, will be put into boats† on the intended Canal ; and twenty-four tons of goods will then be drawn by a Single Horse, and regularly and expeditiously

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conveyed to other Canals with which this will connect through the Middle and Northern parts of the Kingdom, without those uncertainties and delays which have been so justly complained of.

Neither should it be unnoticed, that as manure of every kind will be navigated upon the intended Canal *toll free*, the landed interest will be greatly benefited by this scheme, whilst the produce of that land, so improved, will be conveyed to distant parts where it will be most wanted: in such manner, that it will at once enhance the value of those estates near which it passes, and procure the most real advantages even to those that lie the most remote.

Should it be objected that this Canal will intercept any Streams of water by which Mills are now supplied, or Meadows watered, it is answered, that no such Injury
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is either foreseen, or in the least intended : Infomuch, that all Parties interested therein will be desired to appoint a Surveyor to settle and secure their property, by agreeing with the Surveyor of the Company upon proper clauses to be inserted in the Bill for that purpose : as the Company has nothing more at heart than meeting their Opponents upon the fairest ground, and obviating every difficulty that can be proposed with equity against a scheme which seems to hold forth so many advantages, as well to the landed, as to the commercial interests of the country.

Waste water and heavy rains properly collected in reservoirs, will abundantly supply this Canal ; and there is no doubt but that so considerable a body of water, thus collected, will frequently leave a surplus to run over the different Wears, and
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often accommodate the neighbouring Mills, This has generally been found the Case with most of the Existing Canals, and there is reason to presume that it will not be otherwise with respect to that which is now intended.

The whole extent of this Canal will be about twenty five miles: And the Tonnage proposed to be taken thereon, will enable the traders to deliver their respective Commodities at Worcester, nearly as cheap as they did at Stourport by the old conveyance; whereby the freight from Stourport to Worcester will be saved to the public, as well as the various charges of unloading, re-loading, wharfage &c. &c. Nor can it fail to be noticed that by the new Line, the distance between Birmingham and Worcester will be nearly one third less than by the way
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of Autherly and Stourport. And the moderate tonnage which is intended to be taken, will be sufficient to afford the Subscribers a reasonable and fair return, as they are not ambitious of sharing the enormous dividend of twenty six pounds per annum on each share.

As it has been suggested above, that the Community at large is greatly interested in the success of this undertaking, it will, doubtless, be replied that this has ever been the specious plea of each self-interested adventurer in similar schemes; a mere stalking horse and mask to deceive the unwary, and to obtain those suffrages which he was apprehensive might otherwise be withheld. But, in the present case, this cannot be justly apprehended. For, in schemes of this nature, a set of men undertake to complete a work of public utility,
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entirely at their own expence and risk. They engage themselves to pay, in an ample manner, for all the Land they use, as well as to make amends for every kind of damage they may occasion to individuals : And the only compensation they require or expect, is a small tonnage for the use of their Canal, from such as may hereafter find it their advantage to navigate thereon. No one, even after the completion of the work, is at all compelled to make use of the advantages it holds forth ; and, most assuredly, no part of the trade will ever be diverted into this Channel, unless it is found a more certain, shorter, and cheaper conveyance than any other. Upon this issue alone the subscribers are content to rest the utility of their plan. If they are mistaken in their views, *they* will be the only sufferers : But that they are fully convinced
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that it will prove of *Public* advantage, most manifestly appears from hence, that it is upon this supposition alone that it can possibly turn out to their own *private* emolument. These two are, in the present instance, so closely connected together, that the private adventurer has no other dependance for success; than by compleating his scheme in such a manner, that the community in general shall find it *their* interest to make it answer to *him*. This is an argument not less forcible than obvious, of which every person of plain understanding is a competent judge.

A further consideration in favour of the Plan now offered, is, that the far greater part of the sum subscribed, is to be advanced by men who either actually are, or lately have been, very extensively engaged in trade and commerce; and who, from their local

connections with the Neighbourhood through which this Canal is intended to pass, must be well apprized of the manifold advantages that are likely to arise from it. Neither should it be unnoticed, that such a set of men who have had the earning of their own fortunes, are not likely to part with their property upon a mere visionary scheme, nor to risk, upon a bare *possibility* of advantage, what it has cost them so much toil and labour to acquire.

The above seems an equitable statement of the design now under consideration. Other objections may, however, possibly be started, which at present are not foreseen. Should this be actually the case, the Promoters of this great and useful undertaking are desirous to give them their due weight. They wish them to be submitted to an impartial and candid investigation,

gation, not doubting in the least but that the more the subject is considered, the more will the scheme be approved; and that they will be able to remove every difficulty and objection which is not manifestly founded on prejudice, or such as are evidently dictated by the most selfish motives of private emolument, in opposition to the general advantage of the Community.

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